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EDITORIAL COMMENT



OUR WINTER JOURNEYINGS

It has been our privilege during the past winter to be present at the meetings of a number of clubs and alumnae associations in different cities, and we have also met a great number of nurses socially, and have been entertained by many of them very delightfully. We do not hesitate to say that the JOURNAL is proving to be a strong bond of interest between the nurses of this country, and since its inauguration, with the Congress at Buffalo as an inspiration, greater unity of purpose has developed than during any previous period.

The two vital subjects of general interest are organization for registration and preliminary training. We noted also with great satisfaction, in the lecture courses being given in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, a broadening out upon lines of greater cultivation, instead of keeping exclusively to professional subjects.

We were especially interested in the Philadelphia County Nurses' Association, which organization was the direct outcome of the convention at Buffalo, the alumnae delegates returning to advocate the formation of a local association which should bring the nurses of all schools resident in the city into closer and more harmonious relations. This society, in organizing, fixed its initiation fee at five dollars, thus at the outset providing the means to pay for a course of lectures by a noted man on literary subjects. On the occasion when we were present the subject was "Kipling," and so long as we live this author will have a more interesting personality because of that hour of pleasant entertainment and instruction. The attendance was exceptionally good, fully one-half of the members being present.

The president, Miss Lucy Walker, in speaking of the work to be undertaken by the club in the future, said, very wisely, "We shall first learn to play together, and learn to know each other before undertaking any serious work." We found these nurses anxious to be instructed in the principles of registration, and we shall expect to hear that this society is leading the movement for the organization of a State Association in Pennsylvania.

Mention has already been made in this JOURNAL of the lectures given under the combined auspices of the alumnae associations of New York City. The three which we were fortunate in being able to attend, two by Mr. Ely and one by the City History Club, all most interesting, were not well attended, there being not more than twenty-five nurses at either one of the three lectures mentioned. We believe that New York, more than any place we know of, needs a strong local organization that shall bring the nurses of *all* schools into closer working and "playing" relations. The school lines here are still too sharply drawn, and such lines prevent the progress which one naturally looks for in the greatest nursing centre in the country. The New York State Nurses' Association is bringing the women of the State into more intimate relations; still, when one considers the total number, the membership in that society is small.

The Boston Nurses' Club is working a revolution in the attitude of the graduates of different schools towards one another. During the winter the sub-

ject of a club-house has been agitated, and we hope may soon be realized. As the guest of honor at the annual reception of the club, held at the Hotel Thorndike on the evening of March 13, we had an opportunity to observe the entire absence of school prejudices in this very notable gathering of nurses.

Massachusetts has been a little slow in taking hold of the subject of registration, but there is a degree of intelligent thought being given to the matter which will bear good fruit when the time for action comes.

To return again to the subject of lectures, we were fortunate in being able to attend one of the regular Friday afternoon lectures to the Senior Class at the City Hospital, to which the graduates of the school are always welcome, and we were one of a number of guests upon this occasion. The subject of the lecture was on "Civics," school suffrage, tenement-house problems, and allied subjects being the speaker's themes. Mrs. Mead is one of Boston's noted women lecturers, and her address would have been most entertaining if she had not gone out of her way to tell one of those objectionable stories that the lay public seem to think it always their duty to tell to nurses, with absolute disregard of all courtesy.

Mrs. Mead spent some moments before entering upon the subject of her discourse in warning nurses against the prevailing tendency to become hardened, to have their sympathies blunted, and to lose all reverence and delicacy, through familiarity with suffering. She spoke with authority, because she had once known a young girl before she entered a training-school, who was a lady of most delicate sensibilities, sympathetic, warm-hearted, and considerate, who upon her first visit home after a very few months in the hospital shocked her friends by the irreverent manner in which she spoke of the dead as "stiffs."

We do not question the truth of Mrs. Mead's statement, but we claim that such a story, told to a large audience of nurses, made up of pupils, graduates, and officers of hospitals and training-schools, was out of place and most discourteous. In our quarter of a century of close association with nurses we have never met such a woman. She would not be permitted to remain in any reputable school a single hour. We think it is time for the public to drop the idea that the professional nurse of to-day still belongs to the criminal and ignorant classes. Our faults may be many, but we have yet to find a perfect woman in any class of society, and we feel quite sure that Mrs. Mead would not presume to speak with such frankness before an audience of society women, as common, every-day good manners would make such plain speaking impossible. We certainly have a right to the same amount of courtesies that is accorded other women.

We shall postpone mention of a very charming visit to Baltimore and the Johns Hopkins until we are able to give Miss Nutting's paper on preliminary training.

One of the most delightful experiences that we have enjoyed for many years was a prolonged visit with Miss Dolliver at the Massachusetts General Hospital, when we were allowed to come and go, work or be sociable, just as circumstances and our inclination dictated.

The spirit of improvement has struck the dear old place, and new buildings with wonderful proportions are still being added in many directions, threatening to overshadow the graceful old granite structure with its classic lines.

To be present at our own Alumnæ Association meeting, and to speak to its members, old and new, on the subject so dear to our heart, "registration," was

another great pleasure, and to be made to feel that, although so many years absent, our place was still there touched our heart deeply.

In fact, wherever we have been, even where the faces were all strange, the cordiality with which the editor of the JOURNAL was received and appropriated was one of those gratifying experiences which words cannot express. The little journey of ten weeks was just a succession of pleasant episodes, the memory of which will always remain with us.

NURSING INSTITUTES.

THE endowment of Simmons College as a technical school for women promises to open the way for a central nursing institute for Boston, where the pupils of all schools within the radius may receive the theoretical and preliminary instruction necessary before entering the wards of the hospital for the practical part of their nursing education.

The idea that a nurse shall be taught the theory of her work before entering the wards is no longer new, but to separate the theory from the practice means a complete revolution in the present methods of training-school administration.

Mention was made in the first number of this Journal (October, 1901) of a plan which Miss M. E. P. Davis was trying to work out in Boston for a central preliminary school for nurses. The financial difficulties attendant upon her scheme prevented its development, but her agitation of the subject undoubtedly prepared the way for the plan which may be worked out in connection with Simmons College.

On March 12 a public announcement was made of the aims of the college, which included domestic science in all its branches, secretarial work, library technique, horticultural and landscape gardening, and a general scientific course, "to be of special value to teachers or to those wishing to prepare themselves for medicine or *nursing*." Immediately, Miss Davis and Miss Palmer, who was at that time staying in Boston, invited eight of the leading superintendents in that locality to a luncheon at the Hotel Thorndike, where the subject was discussed of asking the trustees of Simmons College to establish the much-talked-of preliminary course upon such lines as the superintendents and hospital managers should advise.

The guests present were Misses Drown, Riddle, Dolliver, McDowell, Jamme, Hutchinson, and Stevenson, Miss Richards not being able to attend. These ladies formed themselves into a committee and selected Miss Dolliver as their representative to call upon one of the trustees to submit the plan and to ask for further conference. So ably did Miss Dolliver execute her mission that another meeting of the committee was held, an outline drawn up, and Miss Davis, Miss Riddle, and Miss Dolliver appointed a committee to confer with the dean, Miss Arnold, who received their suggestions with the greatest interest and gave them cordial assurance of her coöperation in making the plan a success.

We believe that in those cities where technical schools already exist such courses could easily be established with comparatively little additional cost. For instance, in our own city of Rochester the Mechanics' Institute has an exceptionally fine domestic science department, and it already includes in its corps of instructors a number of able physicians. In the nursing corps of the city are many able women, from among whom one could easily be selected to take charge of such a course, and it would be in line with the policy of the institute to provide such additional facilities as might be necessary to make the course a success.

Such institutions as the "Pratt" in Brooklyn and the "Drexel" in Philadelphia, we should think, could easily be made available for a special course of instruction to nurses.

The movement for this radical change in the method of training nurses comes from the superintendents of schools who have had long years of practical experience, with opportunity to judge of the defects of the present system. Hospitals are becoming more and more educational institutions, and this is right to just the extent that teaching does not interfere with the best welfare of the patient, but to carry on classes in theory, with lectures and examinations at the time when the services of the nurse are so essential to the general welfare of the hospital, complicates the administration to an alarming degree, as the demand for the more careful theoretical instruction of the nurse increases from year to year.

The more universal the agitation, the more quickly the change will be accepted.

When we have established central nursing institutes we shall have made great strides towards a uniform curriculum. With the pupils from half a dozen schools receiving their instruction in anatomy, physiology, hygiene, bacteriology, domestic science, etc., etc., from one staff of able instructors, all passing the same examinations, it will then remain for the hospitals to provide instruction in practical nursing in all its varying branches.

The whole idea of preliminary training means a great reform, and the plan is yet so new that it needs the united energies of our ablest women. How the idea has taken form at the Johns Hopkins will be given in the next number.

STATE MEETINGS.

THE annual meeting of the New York State Nurses' Association was a notably well conducted and harmonious gathering. It needs to be plainly understood that those nurses who have become members during the year are *charter* members individually. It now remains for the associations to make application for membership, according to the instruction given in the secretary's report. Hereafter the official reports and announcements of the society will be made through the pages of this JOURNAL.

We understand that the Illinois nurses are to fix the eligibility lines at their next meeting, and we also are advised that the nurses of North Carolina are moving in the direction of State organization.

When the young nurses of to-day look back a quarter of a century to this time when State organization began, what a strange, crude condition of things will seem to have existed. It is for us to sow that those who are to come after us may reap.

